

REMARKS

In the aforementioned claim amendments, claims 1-2, 5-6, 9-10, 15-17 and 20-21 are canceled and claims 3-4, 7-8, 11-13 and 18 are amended. Now pending in the application are claims 3-4, 7-8, 11-13 and 18-19, of which claims 3-4, 7-8, 11-13 and 18 are independent. The following comments address all stated grounds for rejection and place the presently pending claims, as identified above, in condition for allowance.

Patentable Subject Matter

Claims 3-4, 7-8, 11-13 and 20 are indicated to recite patentable subject matter and would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. In the forgoing claim amendments, Applicants rewrite 3-4, 7-8 and 11-13 in independent form. The subject matter recited in claim 20 is incorporated into amended claim 18. No new matter is introduced in the claim amendments.

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-2, 5-6, 9-10, 15-19 and 21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,405,279 to Kondo *et al.* ("Kondo"). In the forgoing claim amendments, Applicants cancel claims 1-2, 5-6, 9-10, 15-17 and 21. Applicants also amend claim 18 to incorporate the limitations recited in claim 20, which is indicated to be allowable. Claim 20 is canceled.

Applicants specifically note that the claims are canceled or amended to expedite the prosecution of the pending application. The foregoing claim amendments are not to be construed as an acquiescence to the rejection of the claims set forth in the instant Office Action.

Applicants submit that the claim amendments should be entered and reconsidered. In light of the foregoing claim amendment, Applicants believe that the pending claims are in condition for allowance and request the Examiner pass the pending application to issuance.

CONCLUSION

If there are any remaining issues, an opportunity for an interview is requested prior to the issuance of another Office Action. If the above amendments are not deemed to place this case in condition for allowance, the Examiner is urged to call Applicants' representative at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,
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